

This brochure has been developed to help residents better understand the pros and cons of installing stop signs. Public Works receives numerous requests for the installation of stop signs. Each request is evaluated against nation wide standards to determine if a stop sign is an appropriate safety measure and if installation is warranted. The "Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices", published by the Federal Highway Administration, is used to establish this need.

Most stop sign requests are generated by citizens with a genuine concern for traffic and pedestrian safety who believe that installation of a stop sign would solve many traffic and pedestrian problems. Stop sign installations must hit a balance between the needs of pedestrians and the needs of motorists using the streets. Evaluation of the request may find that a stop sign would only exacerbate a problem and that another method of calming traffic would be more appropriate.

What is the purpose of a stop sign?

Stop signs are used to assign right of way for vehicles approaching intersections. They are not used for speed control devices or reducing "cut through" traffic by inconveniencing motorists.

Why wouldn't stop signs along our street help to slow traffic?

Motorists tend to accelerate to higher speeds to make up for time lost at stop signs. Vehicle speeds will decrease within two hundred feet of an intersection but will remain unchanged or increase between intersections.

What harm would another stop sign do?

When stop signs are installed where the need to control right of way is questionable, there would be an increase in traffic delay and congestion with little or no gain in safety. In actuality, safety is sometimes reduced. Incidences of rear end collisions sometimes increase; pedestrian accidents may also increase due to a false sense of security provided by the stop sign. Excessive use of stop signs tends to frustrate motorists who may divert to less suitable streets. If motorists observe that cross street traffic is light or virtually non-existent, the value of the sign will be questioned and vehicle will roll through or ignore the sign entirely. This reduces the credibility of stop signs.

Other costs

Physical installation of a stop sign is relatively inexpensive, however there are associated costs that must be considered.

The sign must be maintained after installation.

Motorists consume extra fuel stopping at a stop sign and then reaccelerating whether or not any other vehicles are present. When this is multiplied over a period of years, fuel usage is significant.

Extra fuel consumption leads to increased air pollution, especially in the immediate vicinity of the sign.

Residents living adjacent to the stop sign experience an increase in noise pollution made by vehicle stopping and then accelerating.

Where should stop signs be installed?

Stop signs are placed at

1. Entrances to designated through streets (arterial or collector roadways).
2. Intersections approved by the city traffic engineer as a result of stop sign warrant studies.

The major criteria reviewed to determine whether or not a stop sign should be installed are:

1. Accident history at the intersection
2. Visibility conditions
3. Vehicular and pedestrian conflicts
4. Any unusual conditions to include:
 - Any facility that generates an unusually high volume of traffic and/or pedestrians
 - Regular use of an intersection by school age children, the elderly or physically impaired pedestrians

- Uniqueness of geometry
- Visible signs of traffic problems (skid marks, fixed object collisions)
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If a stop sign is not appropriate, what can be done to improve the safety of an intersection?

There may be alternative solutions to problems at an intersection. Shrubbery obscuring visibility can be trimmed by the property owner or the city. Increased police enforcement periodically targeting speeders is an effective way to slow down traffic. Yield signs or warning signs may also be more suitable than a stop sign in certain instances.

Motorist education and adherence to traffic laws as well as pedestrian awareness and caution are most probably the most effective solution to traffic mishaps.

Useful phone numbers

To report a downed or damaged stop sign – Public Works Dispatch 543-8765.

To report speeding problems – Hartford Police Department – 527-7300.

Stop Sign Installation Requests

Requests for new stop sign installations should be addressed in writing to this department.

Stop Signs



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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
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